

Protect Net Neutrality or this could happen to you

Net Neutrality is essential to free speech, equal opportunity and economic innovation in America. Since the FCC removed this basic protection in 2005, the top executives of phone and cable companies have stated their intention to become the Internet's gatekeepers and to discriminate against Web sites that don't pay their added tolls.

This fundamental change would end the open Internet as we know it. It would damage everyone's ability to connect with others, share information and participate in our 21st century democracy and economy. The FCC must ensure that broadband providers do not block, interfere with or discriminate against any lawful Internet traffic based on its ownership, source or destination.

Now, I'm sure many of you at the FCC feel that not defending Net Neutrality does not affect you, but think of it like this. Say you trade your stocks through one website, such as E-Trade.com. Now let's say that your service provider is partnering with another online stock exchange website. With Net Neutrality, your access to E-Trade.com is completely unrestricted, but without it, it is very likely that your ISP could slow down or completely block your access to E-Trade, forcing you to either be patient while you miss out on those key trades, or to use their service instead, potentially losing money that you have made on your investments in the transfer. This may sound like a far fetched claim, but this is HIGHLY likely. All one has to do is a little research to find clear cut cases of such actions.

Another possible scenario that could arise out of a loss of Net Neutrality is this. Let's say that several telecom companies are competing for a contract with an university to provide internet access and network support to the campus, as well as outside access to college resources such as e-learning, e-mail, grades, and course scheduling among other services. Only one can win, right? Well what if one of the losing companies decided to get back at the university and completely cut the university off from their customers, both civilians and businesses. Net Neutrality prevents this from happening, but without it, this kind of retribution would not only be possible, it would be in effect sanctioned by the FCC's ruling.

One more scenario, and this one is very feasible. AT&T, yahoo, and Microsoft sort of form a partnership with one another in effect. AT&T and Microsoft both draw upon the search capabilities and other services provided by yahoo's website, although Microsoft has been waning in this somewhat. Now let's say that the FCC decides to dissolve Net Neutrality. Now, AT&T could freely decide to cut off their customers from websites that offer the same services as yahoo. This includes other search engines, stock market websites, e-mail websites, casual Flash gaming websites, photo sharing, online shopping of many many kinds, web hosting companies, news, media, phone directories, instant messaging services, internet radio streams, online file storage, job listings, phone listings, maps and driving directions, etc. etc. As you can see, yahoo's website offers a tremendous

amount of resources. Does this mean that AT&T subscribers should be forced to use them and ONLY them just because AT&T and yahoo are business partners? Of course not?

What if that logic were to be applied on a more physical scale. Say you have an auto shop in town that has a business deal with the city to perform maintenance on city vehicles. Would it be fair to the citizens of the city to be FORCED to use that auto shop, when one right over in the next town can do the same work, possibly better, or for less money? Of course not! Anti-trust laws stop this from happening. But anti-trust doesn't seem to be working for the telecoms companies and the internet. Net Neutrality is the "anti-monopoly legislation" of the internet. Net Neutrality allows competition on the internet, and the freedom of it's users to choose what websites they want to use.

There is documented evidence of ISPs restricting access to websites for whatever reason they see fit. For example, in 2005 an ISP by the name of Telus was having union disputes with the Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU). During this conflict, Telus completely BLOCKED access to a website that was supportive of the union. All of this can be found at:

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2005/07/24/telus-sites050724.html?print>

As you can see, this is a REAL threat, and the only thing that is keeping telecoms companies from doing this is, well nothing. That's what we are fighting for. If the FCC doesn't step in NOW and institute legislation to prevent an "information monopoly", then we are just going to have another "Ma Bell" scenario, only this time it will be the FCC who have allowed it to happen.

Protect the Internet. In America, ALL people have the fundamental right to choice, and this right should not be limited or abridged just because the choice is relayed with ones and zeros.

Signed,
Airman Andrew Seich.